

HAZEL HURST

BLACKED OUT

Helen Kitchen Branson

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

Blind from infancy, Hazel Hurst has not only freed herself from the chains of those who walk in the dark, but has opened a new world to others similarly afflicted.

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WHAT would you do if you were "blacked-out"—not just for the duration, but for your whole life?

That is the question that challenged Hazel Hurst, from the day when a tired doctor accidentally put the wrong drops in her eyes—from the day twenty some-odd years ago when she was born.

But Hazel Hurst was just like any other baby—she kicked and cooed and grew as all babies will; she played with the children on her block and got bumped and skinned and hurt; in fact it wasn't until Hazel was five years old and wanted to roller skate that her mother told her she was blind. It was not until then that Hazel Hurst realized that she was different.

Hazel completed her elementary and high school education in much the same manner as her sighted school fellows. It was when she decided to attend college and prepare for her life work that the real trouble began. Friends and relatives advised first,

then almost insisted, that she content herself with one of those quiet corners designated by fate for the blind—but Hazel Hurst would never sit in a corner with a braille book and a radio or a knitting needle. No, not this determined young woman. She just smiled in the quiet way she has, held her head up, and with a challenge in her words replied, "If you don't like your lot, build a service station on it."

So, equipped with a Columbia University education, a charming personality, and understanding heart, and a real will to prove to a skeptical world that "The blind want help to help themselves, not sympathy or exploitation," Hazel Hurst set out on her mission.

The competition of a hurrying sighted world full of business was not as kindly as the students at high school and university. Miss Hurst's inability to move about freely hampered her at every turn. What she needed was some means of safe mobility that would allow her to go un-

of antitoxin should be given at once.

The brightest light in the whole problem of botulism is the fact that the toxin, which may have developed after canning, is destroyed by heat. If boiling of the food after removal from the can has been attained and continued for ten or fifteen minutes there is no danger of botulism. The survival of spores may occur, but their production of new toxin during their short stay in the gastro-intestinal system is negligible in the creation of a case of botulism. It will be realized then that the great danger is the consumption of home preserved foods used from the can without heating, as in salads. There is nothing more reprehensible and dangerous than the disguising of an unpleasant taste in spoiled food by means of some sauce or dressing. Whole families may be

destroyed by such methods.

Thus, it is urged that every housewife do canning and preserve the excess fruits and vegetables from her victory garden. In addition to this, canning of plentiful products which can be purchased at the market in season should be undertaken as a patriotic duty.

Canning, however, should be properly performed as indicated and the final safeguard of boiling the food after removal from the can eliminates the last vestige of danger. Foods that have been preserved in the refrigerator for a long number of days, such as roast turkey, cold meats and other products, should be boiled (as creamed dishes or stews) for the prescribed time before being eaten. There will be no "Death in the Pot" if the pot boils!



From the Mouths of Babes

A class of boys, averaging about 12 years of age, had been examined in grammar one day, and the next day in geography. Evidently one youth had mixed the two subjects, because in answer to the geographical question about zones, he wrote: "There are two zones, masculine and feminine. The masculine is either temperate or intemperate, the feminine is either torrid or frigid."

—Mills Warrior

aided—not just from one town or state to another—but all over the world if necessary. She must plan and study the work for the blind already under way in order that she might launch her efforts at the point where help was most needed. She must free the sightless from the unwarranted stigma brought to the blind by a misunderstanding of their needs and capabilities.

Out Of Bondage

It was the Seeing Eye in Morristown, New Jersey, that made it possible for Hazel to be free; it was her hometown, Ogdensburg, N. Y., Rotary Club that made it possible for her to travel to Morristown and train at the Seeing Eye with "Babe," her first guide dog.

Together Miss Hurst and Babe toured not only the United States, but also, under the auspices of Rotary International, they visited Europe. Miss Hurst found that she must not only study the work for the blind, but continually explain to a sympathetic, yet misunderstanding public that the blind only ask a chance for normal social and economic adjustment rather than sympathy and charity. At London, due to a regulation which did not permit animals to enter England without quarantine, Miss Hurst was not allowed to land with Babe. She stayed aboard the boat until the difficulties were straightened out. Later Miss Hurst received an apology from King Edward VIII. "More fuss was made over this incident than was warranted," Miss Hurst

insisted. "It was a natural mistake. After all, guide dogs were very uncommon in those days; how were the officials to know what to do."

It was in 1939 at Monrovia, California, that Miss Hurst founded the Hazel Hurst Foundation for the Blind, "a philanthropic organization devoted to the training of guide dogs and the vocational education and rehabilitation of the blind," to use Miss Hurst's own description.

Miss Hurst's observation and study had proved to her that the blind need two things: mobility and a means for making a living wage. The policy of her foundation not only makes it possible for qualified blind to secure without cost, (except for transportation and living expenses while in training), a guide dog, but through her placement bureau helps them to find work which will allow them to become self-sustaining, self-respecting citizens.

The Blind Can Fight!

As the manpower shortage in the country became more acute, Miss Hurst felt that the blind should be able to alleviate the situation, at least in part, by helping on the production lines with jobs that are done essentially through the sense of touch.

She surveyed production line jobs in the Lockheed Aircraft factories in California, testing the jobs herself to see whether a blind person could do them safely and efficiently. She proved without a doubt that a guide dog "normalizes" the blind person to a point where he goes about the factory,

as well as to and from work, without difficulty.

Through the cooperation of Lockheed officials Miss Hurst has placed more than 150 sightless men and women on the assembly lines in the Lockheed and Vega plants. Her past experience in blind employment had taught her that the visually handicapped must be placed under identical conditions with the sighted; that is, there must be no coddling if blind labor is to compete in regular industry. If her program for post-war employment of the blind was to be successful, the wartime employment must be on a paying basis.

A Job Well Done

The success of Miss Hurst's placement work has been best expressed by C. L. Pelton, superintendent of fabrication at Lockheed who wrote her on October 9, 1942, "Your placement of blind and partially blind workers in our factories has been completely successful. My foreman are pressing me now for more of your people . . . I am convinced that many of the present blind people plus the many more who are going to be coming home blinded from the war can be rehabilitated mentally, given training, and absorbed into industry where they will be self-respecting, self-sufficient individuals able to compete with sighted persons."

The placement of these blind men and women in this wartime work is just one step in Miss Hurst's program. These people are merely smoothing

the ropes for many soldiers, sailors, and marines who will lose their sight in the war. The Hazel Hurst Foundation is laying the ground work for the economic and social independence of not only the civilian blind, but the war blind as well. "The men who return sightless from the fight for freedom deserve the freedom for which they fought," declares Miss Hurst.

Declaration Of Independence

"Any ambitious blind person can do almost anything that a sighted person can with few exceptions—the most obvious being the problem of getting from place to place. With the aid of a guide dog he can achieve mobile independence; with a guide dog and vocational rehabilitation he can lead a normal, active life," Miss Hurst explained when addressing a convention of the Idaho Progressive Society of the Blind in 1941. Then patting the head of the small gray-black German Shepherd at her feet she smiled and answered a question from the audience. "Of course I enjoy living. If you don't like your lot, build a service station on it."

If you want to know just how large a service station Miss Hurst has built, ask the many blind men and women she has placed in war industry and private employment as they go swinging along the street safely and unaided, save for a small, German shepherd dog. That's why they call her, "the woman behind the man behind the man behind the gun."

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HELEN KITCHEN BRANSON

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